

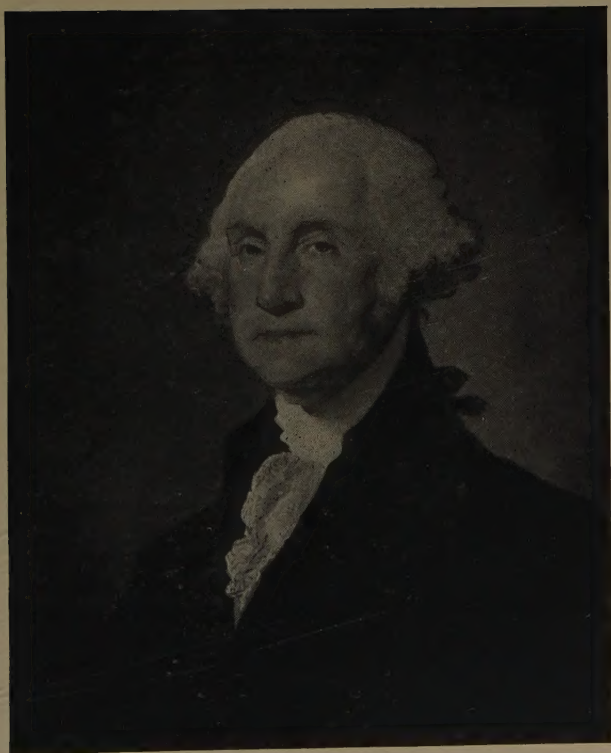
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GEORGE WASHINGTON

by Gilbert Stuart

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STUART'S PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON

GEORGE WASHINGTON shares with Abraham Lincoln the distinction of being the best known American. This is due in both cases to their services to their country, their personal qualities, appreciated in their own generation and ever since, and to the number of existing portraits. In the case of Lincoln these are photographs, while in that of Washington they are paintings and sculpture. The list of artists who painted the First President is a long one, and includes Wm. Dunlap, Robert Fulton, Charles Wilson Peale, Robert Edge Pine, Archibald Robertson, James Sharples, Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull and Joseph Wright. Houdon and Guiseppe Ceracchi made busts of him. Washington's personal feeling towards the wide desire for his portraits is voiced in a note he sent to Judge Hopkinson in 1785, which reads, "I am so hackneyed to the touches of the painter's pencil that I am now altogether at their beck, and sit 'like Patience on a monument' while they are delineating the lines of my face. It is a proof, among many others, of what habit and custom may accomplish; at first I was as impatient at the request, and as restive under the operation as a colt is under the saddle; next time I submitted very reluctantly, but with less flouncing! Now no dray-horse moves more readily to his thill than I to the painter's chair." (The Republican Court, by R. W. Griswold, 1855.)

Of the painters mentioned above, the one with the greatest ability was Gilbert Stuart. His genius was acknowledged in his own day, and since then no American has rivalled him in portraiture. Stuart returned to America in 1792 after brilliant successes in England and Ireland, with the intention of painting Washington's portrait. In 1795 he had his wish. He was able at different times to paint three portraits of Washington from life. The first

was not successful and was destroyed by the artist; the second, a full-length, was painted for the Marquis of Lansdowne, and replicas of this portrait by Stuart were ordered by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island in February, 1880. These are now treasured in the State Houses in Providence and Newport. The third portrait, the famous "Athenum" head, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, was purposely left unfinished in order that it might remain in his studio, and be used for the purpose of making replicas. This portrait was painted in Stuart's studio in Germantown, Philadelphia. Washington made a strong impression on the artist, and Stuart said of him that "he never saw in any man such large eye-sockets, or such breadth of nose and forehead between the eyes, and that he read there the evidence of the strongest passions possible to human nature." That there were many replicas of this head is true, but it is equally true that some are much superior to the others in quality. One of the four finest is the portrait of Washington which was painted for Jonathan Mason of Boston, and which has just been acquired from his descendants by public subscription for the Museum.

Exception to the importance of this example might be taken on the ground that it is a replica. There is a decided difference between a copy by someone else and a replica by the artist. The latter is a true example of his work, executed with full expression of technical skill and sympathetic interpretation, subject of course to the mood of the artist at the time when the portrait is made.

It certainly adds to the interest of the portrait to know something of the man for whom it was painted, for he was an important factor in Stuart's career. Jonathan Mason was born in Boston in 1756 and became one of Massachusetts' best known lawyers and statesmen. He served both his state and nation, and it was while

he was in the United States Senate that he met Stuart, and became his patron. It was about 1805 that the order for the Washington portrait was doubtless given, but whether it was painted in Philadelphia or Boston, cannot at the moment be said. It was at Mr. Mason's suggestion that Stuart moved to Boston, where his remarkable success continued.

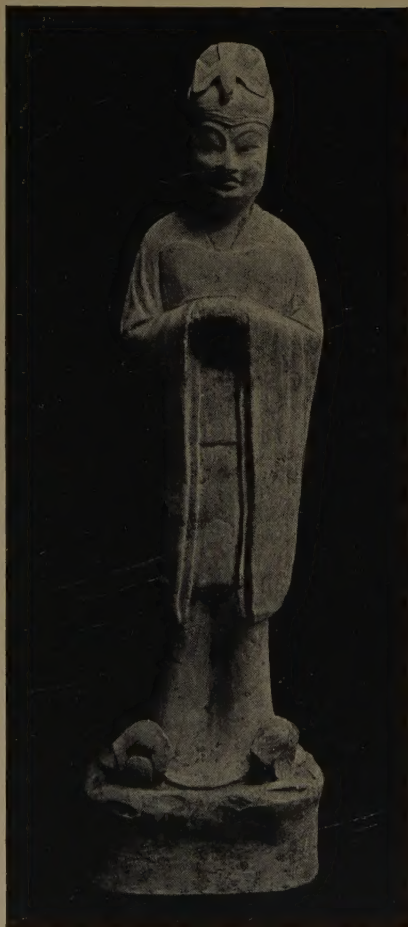
The newly acquired portrait in the Museum is interesting from a technical point of view. It is in remarkable condition, never having lost its finishing treatment with glazes. In this respect it is a superior example of Stuart's method. This has been so completely dealt with in this publication (see the *Bulletin* for October 1914, vol. 2, No. 4, and January 1915, vol. 3, No. 1) that it is needless to repeat it here. The portrait is brilliant and forceful, and the words of Washington Allston apply to it as they do to the original study from life, "Well is Stuart's ambition justified—the sublime head he has left us, a nobler personification of wisdom and goodness, reposing in the majesty of a serene countenance, is not to be found on canvas."

In Stuart, Rhode Island gave to the nation her most brilliant portrait painter and it will be a matter of constant gratification that so fine an example of his work has found a permanent home in the Museum, where it can bear silent tribute to the genius from our own South County.

—L. E. B.

A CHINESE PRIEST OF THE T'ANG DYNASTY

AMONG the purchases with the Museum Appropriation in 1921 was a terra-cotta statuette, thirty-three inches in height, of a Chinese priest of the T'ang Dynasty (618-960 A. D.). Not only is the statuette an excellent example of the larger mortuary figures of the period, but it belongs to a group of important monuments, for on the centre of the high cap



Mortuary Statuette of a Priest
Chinese T'ang Dynasty
Museum Appropriation 1921

in front is a bird in low relief. This is represented as flying downwards, with wings widespread. At present the examples of sculpture with this ornament on the hats are quite limited. Hamilton Bell (*Art in America*, vol. 1, 1913, p. 134) has mentioned four, two of which are in the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago in the Buckingham Collection, one is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the fourth is in private hands. Dr. Berth-

old Laufer and Mr. Bell have both discussed these figures, especially dealing with the bird and its possible relation to the Christian dove of peace. It will doubtless increase our interest in the statuette in the Museum if some of the points mentioned are repeated here.

The question is a fascinating one, for it brings into discussion the chapter of history dealing with the Nestorians in China. These followers of Nestorius, Patriarch of Syria, were driven from the Church in 431, went first to Edessa, and then in 489, because of persecution there, went east to Persia and China, arriving in Shensi province in A. D. 635. Near Singan Fu, in Shensi, in 1625, there was discovered a granite stela bearing the date of A. D. 781. The inscription on it supplies interesting details of the progress made by Nestorian Christians in the Middle Kingdom. They suffered persecution in China at various times, of which the most effective must have been in 845, when the Emperor Wu T'sung of the T'ang Dynasty issued the following edict, "as for the religions of foreign nations, let the men who teach them, as well as those of Ta Tsin (Christ) - - - be required to resume the ways of ordinary life and their unsubstantial talkings no more be heard." The Nestorians survived even this blow to some degree, for scattered groups lived in China for years, even as late as Marco Polo, who in the thirteenth century found them at Kashgar, Samarcand, and Peking.

The exact shade of difference in dress assumed by the Chinese Nestorians remains to be worked out, but the priests who are represented, as in the example in the Museum, have a dress which is characteristic of the T'ang Dynasty, while the high cap is likewise a well-known feature. The real interest centers in the bird. The temptation is great to see in it the dove, symbolic of the Holy Ghost, and both authors noted have called attention to the importance of this in the Nestorian faith. One certainly would like to see direct evi-

dence in our statuette of this interesting chapter of Christianity in the T'ang period.

Apart from its possible connection with the Nestorian Christians, the statuette illustrates the dignity and simplicity of T'ang plastic art. Traces of red and green paint are to be seen as well as the white priming.

Whether it was found in Honan or Shensi province cannot be determined, but it certainly is Middle Kingdom work, and there is some probability that it came from Shensi. This would be all the more likely if it was fully established as a portrait of a Nestorian priest. —L. E. R.

AN ITALIAN BIRTH SALVER

AMONG the characteristic forms of art produced in the artists studios in the fifteenth century were the *deschi da parto* or birth-salvers. These were panels of wood, round or polygonal, painted on one side with the coats-of-arms of the parents and on the other with scenes connected with the birth, mythological or allegorical, biblical subjects or sacred history. These birth-salvers were used in bringing presents of food or something else to the new mother. This we know on the authority of Baldinucci, an Italian writer of the XVII century. The presents were on the side where were the family arms. It was long thought that these birth-salvers were made ready before a birth, but Professor F. J. Mather, Jr. (Art in America, vol. 8, 1919-20, p. 148) raises the point that the *deschi* divide definitely into boy and girl groups and so could hardly have been made previous to the birth.

The group of Italian birth-salvers which have survived to date are very limited in number. Of these in America there are two in the New York Historical Society Gallery, one in Fogg Museum in Cambridge, two in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and one in the Rhode Island School



Birth - Salver

Florentine. about 1430

Gift of Mr. Manton B. Metcalf, 1918

of Design. The last was a gift to the Museum in 1918 from Mr. Manton B. Metcalf. It is the well-known one from the Stefano Bardini Collection in Florence, and has been published and described in Schubring: (Cassoni, pl. XII, No. 81, p. 236 of the text).

The birth-salver no longer bears on the reverse the coat-of-arms of the parents, so identification is impossible; but the obverse has its decoration still in excellent preservation. It is the scene of the Birth of the Virgin. In the centre is the bed with the new mother, St. Anne, in front are two nurses bathing the baby, on the left are two servants warming some linen at the fireplace, while on the right is a neighbor entering to pay her respects and bring presents. In the center, at the foot of the bed, an open archway leads out into a courtyard, over the wall of which is seen the Italian sky.

The birth-salver in the Museum is Florentine and made about 1430. It would be interesting to know who painted this sal-

ver but one can only hazard a guess on stylistic grounds. That such objects received the attention of well-known artists can be easily shown, and in connection with them has been mentioned among others the names of Pontormo, Dello, Benozzo Gozzoli and Masaccio. Schubring feels that our salver is in the style of Masaccio. One student of Italian painting has felt a similarity in it to the work of Sassetta. This suggestion was based on a photograph. Sassetta was a Sienese, and, so far as is known, never worked in Florence. It is possible, however, that his style and work were known in the city on the Arno. This question of authorship is further complicated by the large number of workmen in the bottega of the time, and the probability that the influence only of the great artist was felt in the design. As this form of applied art began in the second quarter of the fifteenth and lasted well into the sixteenth century, the Providence example is a comparatively early one.

For us the birth-salver has a very great

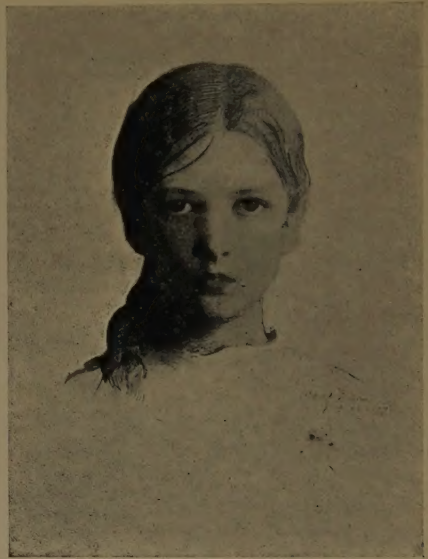
interest, for it brings us directly in contact with the family life, the human interest, the customs and, above all, the universal love and use of art which made Italy in the fifteenth century so remarkable.

—L. E. R.

A DRAWING BY ABBOTT H. THAYER

THE recent memorial exhibitions of the work of the late Abbott H. Thayer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington were fitting tributes to an artist who stood in the front rank of American painters of his day. Both exhibitions included a very representative group of his paintings, with figure subjects, portraits, landscapes, animal and flower studies, and also a large and interesting group of drawings. These helped materially to show the searching of the artist for truth and beauty. A drawing by Thayer, showing a portrait of Gladys, the artist's daughter, was given to the Museum by Mrs. Gustav Radeke in 1921. It is signed and dated June 23, 1897. The drawing is distinctive, both in its placing and pictorial effect, and is rather more finished than some of his other drawings. Furthermore, it shows his genius in expressing the soul of the model before him, especially when that model was a woman.

Thayer belonged to a generation of painters of whom America may well be proud. He was born in Boston in 1849 and lived as a youth in the country, where he began to paint when but eight years old. At first he worked without instruction, then he studied in Brooklyn and New York, finally going to Paris in 1875, where he worked in the *École des Beaux Arts*. Later he worked with Gerome, who apparently taught him much. He returned to America, painted in several cities, and then settled in Monadnock, N. H., where he could rest his soul in the study of the mountains, and, without interruption, seek for that



GLADYS

Drawing by A. H. Thayer

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke, 1921

expression which gave him most satisfaction. His was not the remunerative but uninspiring pursuit of the portrait-painter, but rather the career of one who, careless of financial returns, lived with his Muse and expressed himself as the spirit moved him. Up to the time of his death on May 29, 1921, his work steadily increased in spirituality and inspiration. In this respect Thayer made a great and exceptional contribution to American art. The drawing illustrated merits attention from all who have faith that the ability to draw with inspiration is still with us, although in a lesser degree than in the past. This drawing, like the paintings, gives evidence also of that idealization of woman, which was so characteristic of Thayer and which set him apart from other artists.

THE LIBRARY

The very important gift of books from Mrs. Jane W. Bradley, in memory of Mr. Charles Bradley, included the following:

- Allston, Washington — Outlines and sketches. 1850.
- (L') Art, revue hebdomadaire illustré. 8v. 1878-9.
- Baker, W. S.—William Sharp, engraver. 1875.
- Bason, F.—Catalogue raisonné des objets dans les sciences et art. 2v. 1775.
- Bell, Charles—Anatomy and philosophy of expression. ed. 4. 1847.
- Blanc, Charles—L'Oeuvre de Rembrandt. 2v. 1873.
- Bonington, Richard Parkes — Subjects from the works of R. P. Bonington drawn by T. D. Harding. n.d.
- Botticelli, Sandro—Zeichnungen von Sandro Botticelli zu Dante's Goettlicher Komödie. Herausgegeben von Friedrich Lippmann. 2v. ed. 2. 1887.
- Brash, Richard Rolt—Ecclesiastical architecture of Ireland. 1875.
- Bruillot, François—Dictionnaire de monogrammes, chiffres, lettres, initiales et marques figurées. 1817.
- Canal, Antonio—Urbis Venetiarum prospectus celebriores, Antonii Canal tabulis XXXVIII aere expressi ab Antonio Visentini. 1742.
- Cavalucci, J. and Molinier, Emile—Les Della Robbia. 1884.
- Crowe, J. A. and Cavalcaselle, G. B.—History of painting in North Italy. 2v. 1871.
- Fagan, Louis—Catalogue raisonné of the engraved works of William Woollett. 1885.
- Fagan, Louis—Collectors' marks. 1883.
- Gladstone, William Ewart — Studies in Homer and the Homeric age. 3v. 1858.
- Hassell, J.—Memoirs of the life of George Morland. 1806.
- Houbraken, Arnold—De groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Kontschilders en Schildessen. 3v. 1718.
- King, C. W.—Handbook of engraved gems. 1886.
- Lawrence, Thomas—Catalogue of one hundred drawings of Sir P. P. Rubens, collected by Sir Thomas Lawrence. n.d.
- Longhi, Giuseppe—La calcografia. 1830.
- Lorrain, Claude Gellée—Liber Veritatis; or a collection of prints after the original designs of Claude Le Lorrain; in the collection of His Grace the Duke of Devonshire. Executed by Richard Earlom, in the manner and taste of the drawings. 3v. 1777.
- Maberly, J.—The print collector. 1880.
- Moses, Henry—A collection of antique vases, altars, paterae, tripods, candelabra, sarcophagi, etc. 1814.
- Norton, Charles Eliot—Historical studies of church building in the middle ages. 1880.
- Norton, Charles Eliot—Notes of travel and study in Italy. 1860.
- Ottley, William Young—An inquiry concerning the invention of printing; including also notices of the early use of wood-engraving in Europe, the block-books, etc. 1863.
- Ottley, William Young—A series of plates engraved after the paintings and sculptures of the most eminent masters of the early Florentine school. intended to illustrate the history of the restoration of the arts of design in Italy. 1826.
- Palgrave, Francis Turner—Essays on art. 1886.
- Rembrandt, Harmensz van Rijn—Descriptive catalogue of the etched work of Rembrandt van Rhyn. 1878.
- Rosini, Giovanni—Storia della pittura Italiana. 7v. ed. 2. 1848.
- (Le) scelte pitture de Brescia additate al Forestiere. 1700.
- Scott, Walter—Border antiquities of England and Scotland. 2v. 1814.
- Scott, Walter—Provincial antiquities and picturesque scenery of Scotland. 2v. 1826.
- Sensier, Alfred—La vie et l'oeuvre de J. F. Millet. 1881.
- Smith, John Chaloner—British mezzotinto portraits. 4v. 1884.

Stuart, James and Revett, Nicholas—Les antiquités d'Athènes, mesurées et dessinées. Ouvrage traduit de l'Anglais par L. F. F. 3v. 1808, 1812, 1812. Supplementary volume (4), Antiquities of Athens and other places in Greece, Sicily, etc., by C. R. Cockerell and others. 1830.

Vinci, Leonardo da—Literary works, compiled and edited by Jean Paul Richter. 2v. 1883.

Wibiral, Frederick—L'Iconographie d'Antoine Van Dyck. 1877.

—M. S. P.

EXHIBITIONS FROM APRIL 5th TO JULY 1st, 1922.

April fifth-May second—Memorial exhibition of Silhouettes by Katharine G. Buffum. Etchings by Whistler, Cameron, Bone, McBey and others lent by the estate of Mr. Walter Callender.

May second-June first—Water-colors and drawings by American and European artists.

May third-July first—Early American glass cup-plates, lent by Mrs. H. Martin Brown.

June first-July first—Renaissance art and modern paintings.

The Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design Providence

All communications should be addressed to the General Editor, Mr. L. Earle Rowe

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HOURS OF OPENING.—The galleries are open to the public on every day of the year, with the exception of Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and the Fourth of July. From July 1st to September 15th, the hours are from 1 to 5 P. M. on week days and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays; from September 15th to July 1st the hours are from 10 A. M. to 5 P. M. week days and 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays. The Pendleton Collection is open from 2 to 5 P. M. daily.

Twenty-five cents admission to the museum is charged on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and the museum is free on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Free transferable tickets admitting four persons on pay-days are sent to all members of the corporation. Art students and artists, on application to the authorities, may obtain free tickets of admission for any pay-day. Teachers with pupils of both public and private schools will be admitted without payment upon application.

LIBRARY.

The Library contains 5,000 volumes, 16,747 mounted photographs and reproductions, 3,734 lantern slides, and about 3,510 postcards. During the months of June, July and August the library is closed.

PUBLICATIONS.

Four quarterly bulletins are issued and are sent free of charge to the members, and, on written request, to alumni of the institution.

The year book of the school containing detailed information regarding its many activities, and presenting conditions of admission and a list of courses given in its several departments, will be forwarded free of charge to prospective students and others who are interested in the institution and its work.